



Animal Signs Can Be Puzzling!

Do you like puzzles? I always have. Animals create some of the best puzzles ever, and best of all, they're outdoors! Many animals, especially mammals, are elusive by nature. It is a special surprise when we actually see a raccoon, fox, opossum, deer, or other animal in the flesh. Some might think that hiking a nature trail is boring if they can't see the animals, but really, there are many interesting puzzles to solve. Animals may not like to be seen, but they can't help leaving behind evidence of their presence. If you can find enough pieces, the puzzle of "what left the sign" can be solved. Even a short trail might take hours to explore once you get into the sport of reading animal signs, which I'll call "puzzling," for short.

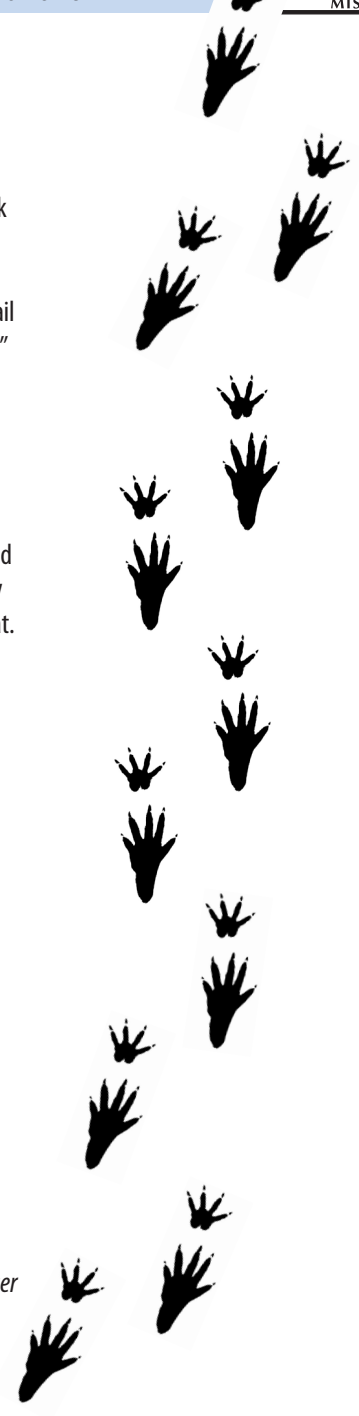
Wild animals are all around us. They are much more common than people think. Just because we don't see them doesn't mean they are not there. Our job as a puzzler is to find evidence of them as we move along a trail or investigate an area. Animals leave behind all kinds of signs, footprints being the most common and easily recognizable. Some others that you will find include droppings - fondly referred to as "scat" - burrows, nests, runways, odors, hair, teeth, feathers, and food leftovers. The key is to really look as you walk, both in the upward direction and downward. Animals signs occur at all levels of habitat. Have you ever found a turtle shell? Puzzle solved.

If you can believe it, scat is a great animal identifier. Many times you can determine what sort of animal left it by looking at its shape, content, and texture. It is usually easy to find, because just like us, animals use the path of least resistance, and the trail is just that. Often you can tell what the animal has been eating by looking at scat. Seeds, insect exoskeletons, fur and feathers are not digestible; therefore travel through the animal's system. Persimmon seeds in raccoon scat are common in the fall.

I could go on, but in order to learn more about solving puzzles, I recommend you visit your local library or book store to pick up an animal tracking field guide. You can get them specifically about tracks, or generalized with everything from scat to what animal dens look like. For a quick start, you can check out the MDC website at <http://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/general-species-information/mammal-facts/mammal-tracks>.

Whatever you do, when you are outdoors, do some puzzling while you're out. You'll be surprised at how good you become solving them, and, how much fun you'll have!

by Tamie M. Yegge, Nature Center Manager



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Jay Henges Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

1100 Antire Road, High Ridge, MO 63049



From the east/St. Louis
I-44 west to Beaumont Antire Road, exit 269. Left over I-44 to Antire Road. Right on Antire. One hundred feet to entrance.

From the west/Eureka
I-44 east to Beaumont Antire Road, exit 269. Follow exit lane around to top.

HOURS:

April 1–November 30

Wednesday: 11 a.m.–7:30 p.m.

Thursday and Saturday: 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Friday and Sunday: 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

December 1–March 31

Wednesday–Sunday: 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Programs are free. Call **636-938-9548** or email **henges.range@mdc.mo.gov** with your name and phone number to sign up for a program requiring registration. Up to two reservations are allowed per registration; groups should contact the range for more information. If you are unable to attend, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Beginning Women's Handgun

Aug 4 • Thursday • 6–9 p.m.

(Ages 16 and up)

This women's program will include handgun operation, shooting fundamentals, safety, maintenance, and safe storage. We start with a classroom session then move to the range for a live-fire session. Although equipment and ammunition will be provided, you may bring your own handgun and ammunition to the live-fire session. (Reservations begin July 21.)

Beginning Skeet

Aug 9–10 • Tuesday and Wednesday • 6–9 p.m. each night

(Ages 11 and up)

If you enjoy shooting a shotgun and want to learn the specifics of the game of skeet, join us for this program. We'll cover appropriate guns, ammunition, rules of the game, etiquette on the field, and shoot a round of skeet. Firearms and ammunition will be provided, or you may bring your own 12 or 20 gauge shotgun. Shotgun experience is recommended. (Reservations begin July 26.)

Beginning Archery

Aug 11 • Thursday • 6–9 p.m.

(Families, fourth grade and up)

Learn the fundamentals of shooting the bow and arrow based on the Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP). This is a fun program for the family, fourth grade and up. All Equipment will be provided. (Reservations begin July 28.)

Beginning Shotgun

Aug 18 • Thursday • 6–9 p.m.

(Ages 12 and up)

Class will start in the Education Center where you will learn safety, actions, chokes, stance, and how to choose and shoot shotguns. Then you will go to the range for live fire, including some clay target shooting. Children ages 12–16 must be accompanied by an adult. Not recommended for students under 90 lbs. (Reservations begin August 4.)



Beginning Atlatl

Aug 20 • Saturday • 8–9:30 a.m.

(Ages 11 and up)

Come learn the art of atlatl from our experts. The atlatl predates the bow and arrow and is a legal method of harvesting deer in Missouri. Ages 11–15 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin August 6.)

Youth .22 Rifle

Aug 27 • Saturday • 8–9:30 a.m.

(Ages 9–15)

Young people who have never experienced shooting .22 rifles are invited to learn safety and proper techniques of shooting .22 rimfire rifles. Firearms, ammunition, and safety equipment are provided. (Reservations begin August 13.)

Hunting season is just around the corner. Time to start thinking about hunter education classes. Taking a course early avoids the last minute rush and no vacancies in courses of your choice. To gain knowledge, you can take the course on-line, attend a class in person, or complete a self-study guide. Everyone must then sign up for a Skills Session class and exam. See <http://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/hunter-education-skills-training> for details.

Busch Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

2360 Hwy D, St. Charles, MO 63304

Youth Air Rifle

Aug 6 • Saturday • 9 a.m.–noon
(Ages 9–15)

Young people who have never had experience shooting are invited to learn the proper techniques of shooting air rifles in a controlled safe environment. Firearms, ammunition, and safety equipment will be provided. Class will meet in the August A. Busch Conservation Area Regional Office classrooms. Ages 9–15 and must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin July 7.)

Archery Day Camp

Aug 10 • Wednesday • 9 a.m.–noon
Aug 11 • Thursday • 9 a.m.–noon
(Ages 9–15)

This two-day program provides students with an opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to safely participate in this fun and rewarding outdoor activity. All equipment and materials will be provided. We will meet in the August A. Busch Conservation Area Regional Office classrooms. We will also introduce campers to the atlatl. Must attend day one in order to attend day two. (Reservations begin July 11.)

Basic Archery

Aug 10 • Wednesday • 6–8 p.m.
(Ages 9 and up)

This program provides students with an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to safely participate in this fun and rewarding outdoor activity. All equipment and materials will be provided for this class. This course will meet in the August A. Busch Conservation Area Regional Office classrooms. Children ages 9–16 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin July 11.)

Metallic Reloading

Aug 17 • Wednesday • 6–9 p.m.
(Ages 11 and up)

An introduction to the equipment, materials, and techniques of reloading metallic cartridges rifle and/or handgun ammunition. This class will be held in the August A. Busch Conservation Area Regional Office classrooms. Ages 11–16 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin July 19.)

Introduction to Bowhunting

Aug 24 • Wednesday • 6–9 p.m.
(Ages 11 and up)

This introductory course will teach the basics of what it takes to become a successful hunter using a bow and arrow. We will meet in the August A. Busch Conservation Area Regional Office classrooms. Children 11–16 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin July 25.)

Duck Hunting 101

Aug 25 • Thursday • 6–9 p.m.
(Ages 11 and up)

This is an introduction course to duck hunting and how to have a successful hunt. This program will take place at the August A. Busch Conservation Area Regional Office classrooms. Ages 11–16 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin July 26.)

Intro to Duck Calling

Aug 31 • Wednesday • 6–8 p.m.
(Ages 11 and up)

Learn basic calling techniques used in hunting situations. Bring the call you will be using in the blind. This program will take place at the August A. Busch Conservation Area Regional Office classrooms. Children ages 11–16 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin August 1.)



Due to the range closure, all Busch Range programs will be held at the Busch Conservation Area classrooms in the St. Louis Regional Office unless otherwise noted.

Programs are free. Call **636-441-4554** to register Monday through Friday 8 a.m.–5 p.m. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Shooting Range Renovations

The Missouri Department of Conservation's August A. Busch Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center in St. Charles is being renovated into an expanded state-of-the-art shooting range featuring more shooting stations and classroom facilities.

To expedite the renovations to the existing site, the shooting range is temporarily closed for public use and will remain closed for the duration of the renovation project. The new range will incorporate the most current national shooting range design standards, including an increased number of shooting stations, new classroom facility, and other building improvements for user convenience, safety, and reduced waiting times. For further information and a camera view of the construction site visit mdc.mo.gov key word "Busch Range".

Unless otherwise indicated, youth under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122



From I-44 east take the Watson Road exit and turn left on Geyer. Cross over the bridge and turn left on Cragwold Road. Follow one mile to the entrance. Enjoy nature exhibits, attend programs, purchase hunting and fishing permits, browse through a nature-related gift shop, and pick up free conservation brochures. Outdoors, enjoy three miles of hiking trails through oak-hickory forest.

HOURS:

Building: Tuesday –Saturday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Area: Daily: 8 a.m.–8 p.m. DST
8 a.m.–6 p.m. CST

Programs are free. Call **314-301-1500** to register. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.



Rawr! The Cats of Missouri

Aug 2 • Tuesday • 10 a.m.–noon
(Ages 7–12)

Mountain lions, bobcats, cheetahs, jaguars... all of these animals are in the cat family. Which ones live in Missouri? Why have you not seen one? Visit Powder Valley for one last nature adventure before school starts to learn about these successful predators. There will be several activities, including games and hands-on tables. (Reservations begin July 19.)

Let's Play in the Water!

Aug 3 • Wednesday • 10–11:30 a.m.
(Ages 3–6)

August is a great month to play in the water. In this interactive program, we will learn about the creatures that live in and around the water. With nets and magnifying viewer cups, we can have a lot of fun and learn something at the same time. (Reservations begin July 20.)

Glade Exploration

Aug 5 • Friday • 9:30–11:30 a.m.
(Families, ages 9 and up)

Glades are one of the most unique ecosystems found in Missouri. Join Missouri Department of Conservation Naturalists as we explore a glade, and discover the unique creatures that call glades home. (Reservations begin July 22.)

You and Me under the Canopy

Aug 10 • Wednesday • 10–11 a.m.
(Ages 2–6)

Comev find out about the topic we are exploring this month. Families, meet in the nature center lobby for a “nature” adventure. Make sure to dress for the weather because we won’t be in the building long. Everyone will hike with the naturalist to a special place in the forest and enjoy a nature story under the tree canopy. Siblings are welcome. In case of inclement weather the program will be indoors and may be shortened. (Reservations begin July 27.)

Beginning Archery at Emmenegger

Aug 19 • Friday • 9:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.
(Adults)

Aug 20 • Saturday • 9:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.
(Ages 10 and up)

Ready, Aim, Fire! Learn the basics of safe archery and practice your skills in an open field with stationary targets. All equipment will be provided. To get to Emmenegger Nature Park, go west on Cragwold Rd. (past the Powder Valley entrance), cross over the highway and go south (left) on Stonewood. Please meet at the pavilion. The entire program will be outdoors, so please dress for the weather. (Reservations begin August 5.)

Pint Size Predators

Aug 30 • Tuesday • 9:30–11 a.m.
(Ages 6 and up)

Two elegant insects that hunt and eat other insects are the dragonfly and the praying mantis. They have adaptations for totally different hunting strategies, one patrolling the air and the other staying put until the moment of ambush. Have you seen any? Were you impressed and curious? Come have some fun this morning while learning more about them. (Reservations begin August 16.)

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122



Hallway Exhibit: Ebb and Flow by MoNEP (Missouri Nature & Environmental Photographers)

This exhibit reflects the artistic point of view of more than two dozen members of the Missouri Nature and Environmental Photographers. The works selected are from a cross section of our membership and all of the images feature water in some form as the main subject. We hope you will enjoy these selected works as much as the photographers have enjoyed capturing the beauty, colors, lines, and patterns that have caught our collective eye.

MoNEP members come from all walks of life, but all enjoy a common passion for photography, nature, and the environment. Our meetings are held at the Ethical Society in Clayton on the third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. and feature speakers who are experts in photography, conservation and/or the environment. We hope you will have the opportunity to be a guest at one of our meetings or to attend our next bi-annual nature photography seminar which will be held on Saturday, September 17, 2016. Please visit www.monep.org for more information.

Soap Making

Aug 12 • Friday • 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

(Ages 18 and up)

Making soap is fun and can be educational. Discover how early Missouri pioneers made soap using the ash from their fires and the fat from their butchered animals. Don't worry if you are squeamish! We will use modern-day ingredients to make soap you can take home and use. (Reservations begin July 29.0.)

Down and Dirty

Aug 25 • Thursday • 9:30–11:30 a.m.

(Ages 3–6)

Remember the fun days of sand boxes and mud pies? Here is the chance to relive some of the joys of our childhood with your own children. We'll provide the dirt; you bring the clean clothes for the ride home! Adults, separate from the children, will learn about the importance of unstructured play and nature exploration for the healthy development of young children. At the same time, our naturalists will take the children to the nature play area where they use their imaginations to get down and dirty in our big pile of dirt! (Reservations begin August 11.)



Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

801 Strodtman Road, St. Louis, MO 63138



From I-270 north, take the Riverview Drive exit (last Missouri exit); go north 2.8 miles. Riverview Drive becomes Columbia Bottom Road at its intersection with Larimore Road. The entrance is on the right-hand side.

HOURS:

Building: Wednesday – Friday: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Saturday–Sunday: 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

Area: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset except authorized activities.

Programs are free. Call **314-877-6014** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

With the sweltering heat that St. Louis summers can bring it is tempting to stay indoors, but Columbia Bottom offers sites that just may tempt you outside. With summer in full swing come check out the many birds that call us home for the summer; indigo buntings, summer and scarlet tanagers, meadowlarks, egrets, and herons all have been seen on the area. Relax by over six miles of river



front with a rod and reel and be ready to catch the “big one.” Come to our sunset hike to listen for coyotes and owls who are gearing up for their night shift. Whether you come out for a program, to check out one of our discovery backpack, or to hike on your own, you are sure to enjoy our area. Remember; when the temperatures heat up things really get going at Columbia Bottom.

Geocaching at Columbia Bottom for Beginners

Aug 9 • Tuesday • 11 a.m. –1 p.m.

(Families)

Have one more adventure before school starts! Geocaching is a modern day treasure hunt that combines technology and nature into an adventure in the great outdoors. Join us at Columbia Bottom and learn about this exciting and sometimes challenging hobby. Bring along your own GPS or borrow one from us! Dress for the weather. (Reservations begin July 27.)

Sunset over the Cropland

Aug 12 • Friday • 7:15–9 p.m.

(All ages)

Columbia Bottom Conservation Area is big sky country in North County. The sunsets here can be spectacular! We will watch the last rays of the setting sun as we walk from the Slough Exploration Station to the Cropland Overlook. We'll discuss how our green fields of corn and soybeans benefit wildlife, farmers, and MDC. Meet at parking lot “M”—about four miles from the front entrance. (Reservations begin July 27.)



MDC is excited to partner with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to provide insect repellent towelettes and educational materials free-of-charge to visitors at our public venues to help visitors understand how to protect themselves from tick and mosquito borne illnesses. Proper preparation and education will help you enjoy the outdoors without the worry of ticks and mosquitos.

August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area

2360 Hwy D, St. Charles, MO 63304

Aquatic Adventure

Aug 4 • Thursday • 9–11 a.m.

(Ages 6 – 12)

What could be more fun in early August than to see what cool things live in an aquatic habitat? Come and learn about an aquatic food chain and how we can affect it. There will be plenty of time to actually interact with a real aquatic environment. Dress appropriately for the weather and netting aquatic critters along the shore of the Busch Refuge Lake. All necessary equipment will be provided. (Reservations begin July 21.)

Discover Nature Youth Frog Gigging Clinic

Aug 5 • Friday • 7–11 p.m.

(Ages 11–15 accompanied by adult mentor)

In this clinic held at B.K. Leach Conservation Area, we'll teach you how to hunt frogs at night using a technique called gigging. Gigging for frogs is an entertaining and unique summer pastime that can be enjoyed by all. Learn about frog habitat, the basics of frog gigging, necessary equipment, gigging rules and regulations. When it gets dark, we'll head to the lakes to actually go frog gigging! Afterwards, we'll demonstrate how to clean and cook your frogs, and everyone will get to taste a sample of real frog legs! (Reservations begin July 1.)



Reptiles of the Marais Temps Clair (MTC) CA

Aug 20 • Saturday • 8–11 a.m.

(All Ages)

A warm summer morning is a good time to see turtles and snakes basking in the sun in their native habitat. Several species of turtles and snakes can usually be seen during a summer hike at MTC. Join us for a 2 ½ mile hike on the levees at MTC to view reptiles and other native



wildlife of eastern St. Charles County. Learn the identifying characteristics of the native turtles and snakes as we view them thru spotting scopes. (Reservations begin August 8.)



From I-64/40 take Hwy 94 south to Hwy D; turn west on D for approximately two miles. The area entrance is on the north side of Hwy D.

HOURS:

Building: Monday–Friday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Area: Daily: 4 a.m.–10 p.m.

Programs are free. Call **636-441-4554** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

*Conservation
makes Missouri
a great place to
hunt and fish.*

Get information on hunting, trapping, and fishing through the annual Regulations Summary booklets available on-line: <http://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/summary-missouri-fishing-regulations> and <http://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/regulations/summary-missouri-hunting-and-trapping-regulations>.

Rockwoods Reservation

2751 Glencoe Road, Wildwood, MO 63038



From I-44 take Hwy 109 north 4 miles to Woods Avenue; left on Woods Avenue, then immediately right on Glencoe Road. From Manchester Road take Hwy 109 south 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, then immediately right on Glencoe Road.

HOURS:

Building: Monday–Friday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Area: Sunrise to one-half hour after sunset except authorized activities.

Programs are free. Call **636-458-2236** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Aquatic Adventure

Aug 3 • Wednesday • 9–11 a.m.

(Ages 6–12)

What could be more fun in early August than to see what cool things live in an aquatic habitat? Come and learn about an aquatic food chain and how we can affect it. There will be plenty of time to actually interact with a real aquatic environment. Dress appropriately for the weather and netting aquatic critters along the shore of the Rockwoods woodland pond. All necessary equipment will be provided. (Reservations begin July 20.)



Waters of Rockwoods Reservation

Aug 24 • Wednesday • 5–7 p.m.

(Ages 8 and up)

Rockwoods Reservation is known for its trees, but did you know the area is home to many springs, creeks, and ponds? Learn about aquatic animals, stream health, and the natural history responsible for the water features. Make sure to wear your

water shoes as you'll be encouraged to wade in the creek to collect samples for investigation. (Reservations begin August 10.)

MDC's Mission: *To protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state; to facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources.*

Forest Park Office

5595 Grand Drive, St. Louis, MO 63112



From I-44 take Kingshighway north to West Pine Blvd, turn left. Follow West Pine to Lindell, turn left. Continue on Lindell past Union Drive to Cricket, turn left. Take first right onto Grand Ave. The visitor's center is on the right.

HOURS:

Monday–Friday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Programs are free. Call **314-877-1309** to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Waterway Exploration

August 3 • Wednesday • 10 a.m.–noon

(Ages 9–16)

School hasn't started just yet! Join us to explore the Seven Pools mini waterfall. We will work in teams to build a natural floating object, and then send it down the waterway to see how it fares. Depending on its success, we'll then experiment to improve its design. Participants should dress to get very wet, and wear water shoes and sunscreen. This program meets at Bowl Lake, just south of Jefferson Lake in Forest Park. Participants can park on Clayton road within the park. (Reservations begin July 6.)